



CALVERT

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Please accept these
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~CALVERT~

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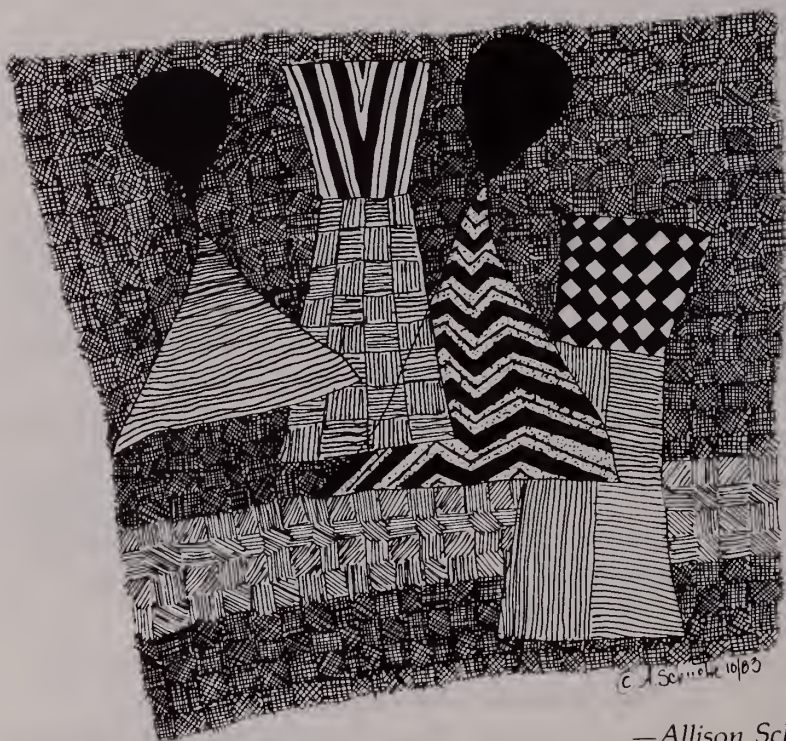
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cover design: Jackie MacMillan

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Paul Gehres	2	Postcard
Allison Schuette	6	Pen and Ink
Sibbie O'Sullivan	7	Donald At His Easel
Albert Kapikian	8	thankyou America
Ana Lazo	10	Angles
J.D. Kleinke	11	The Five-Twenty-Five
Laura Outerbridge	13	Moving
Carl Channell	14	drawing
Ruth B. Felsen	15	Ophelia
Robert Zimet	16	Jessica 1982
Lesley Hall	17	Car on the Other End of the Train
Jay Dougherty	20	Before and After the Blast
Susan Libby	22	From the Roots Up
Jackie MacMillan	23	Scrap Metal
Glenn Moomau	24	Clock Radio
Ana Lazo	32	Dream #7
Laura Dickinson	33	Light
Betty Bernard	34	Medea
J. Barry Messer	36	Old Shucking House

Shelly Hall	37	The Party's Over
Gerry Hinds	38	photograph
W.R. Tish	39	Olden Slumbers
Reed Whittemore	40	I Have Heard
John Carlson	41	Sleeping Chinese Women
Stephen Young	42	Mad Children #2
Dawnelle Loiselle	43	Gold-Eyed Lacewing
Michael Clark	48	Seized II
Mary Welby Whiting	49	German Girl with a Hose
Verlyn Flieger	50	Invitation to the Dance
Saundra Maley	51	Leonardo
Tom White	52	Dart Night
Rose Solari	53	For Emma Livry
Paul Souders	54	Bingo Night
Daryl Wakeley	55	There Can Be Breakages in Japanese A Love Story
Robert Zimmet	61	Mansion on Bancroft Street
Edward Hirsch	62	Edward Hopper and the House by the Railroad (1925)



—Allison Schuet

Donald At His Easel

Today I am not painting but waxing frames,
my arm warmed by its churning,
the cloth gauze-like but strong. I do not turn
to the light today, or the names,
the line and shadow that come to me
as easily as breathing. I've finished for a while
and if I rock upon my heels, look out upon the red tile
buildings and see the free
space shearing from the silver roof,
who's to say I haven't stood my solitary place
and seen what others would erase,
who's to say I haven't been of use,
and turning from the easel's splintered girth
indulged my hands in wax and learned my worth.

—Sibbie O'Sullivan

thankyou America

*for Ken,
a Vietnam Vet exposed to Agent Orange*

thankyou America
for sparing us your angels tonight

yes death is such an embarrassment I know
one needs a soothsayer
of extraordinary delicacy
these days a Cassandra simply will not do
I dare say such neurotic maidenhood
has fallen out of fashion these days
one craves a clean white wordless fellow
to utter the word cancer

dead here on the bed he built

every now and then we need to find out
how well we are dying
why we want so little, some laughter, a hand
why we redream ourselves every night

and I shall carry a basket of dead hands
to the bingo games
lay them out one by one
a bonus to be placed on any square

we have had the same beginning
let us have the same end

yes his skullcap is perhaps
a bit loose
let me perfect it for you

he is willing to wade in all your light
all his neversongs
all his bardless fire

a dead spider is in the window
its exuberant legs legs braided in the heat

the morning is red and sticky no moon
he's sure to bed before it rises

—*Albert Kapikian*



—Ana Lazo

The Five-Twenty-Five

The clock sat on the milk crate they used as a night table. Arabella didn't bother looking at it. A few minutes after her eyes broke to the icy bite of the pale blue bedroom air, she heard the five-twenty-five.

Echoing up from the bottom of Panther Hollow came the long, slow roll of the old freight train. Arabella listened to it rumble under the bridges that she and Peter always crossed on their way into Schenley Park.

They would cut through there with albums and six-packs on their way over to Pam's in Squirrel Hill. Sometimes they would stop and get high there; and in the summer there were movies they showed on the hill where everyone plays frisbee in the daytime. They would sit there, maybe watching the movie, maybe not, and drink wine, and wind up in somebody's apartment. They wound up in somebody's apartment after everything.

But they always came back, through Schenley Park, under the stars or a veil of clouds singed with crisp, sunrise pinks and oranges if it was late enough. They would cross back over one of the bridges and pass a couple of fishermen or a woman in a white uniform and scuffed white shoes, rubbing her eyes, folding and unfolding her arms. They always came back, holding onto each other, shivering, stumbling, shivering, back here, and leave the window open and fall into bed and make love; and two hours later it would be cold in the room and Arabella would wake up, her eyes spicy hot, and listen to the long, slow roll of the five-twenty-five.

Every morning, the steel on steel unwinding of the old train as it ran out of town. Over to Chicago, down to D.C., maybe Philadelphia, maybe back home, back into the hills of western Pennsylvania where people sucked coal and oil out of the ground, making babies, losing hair.

No, not out there; there were no trains that Arabella could remember. None that came from Pittsburgh. Not the five-twenty-five anyway. That left. Left Pittsburgh. It left western Pennsylvania, bound for Chicago, St. Louis, New Orleans, yes, yes, New Orleans where her brother was stationed, sending her pictures of the great boats, like old bathtubs, they loaded them up, with the stuff from trains, trains like the five-twenty-five. Where did the boats go? Where? Where...

Arabella was hungry. She and Peter went to bed early last night; Peter had had too much beer for supper; and now her stomach tightened up and let go in grinding growls. There were eggs downstairs, and vanilla yogurt, and crackers; there was some peanut butter, and an unbroken box of egg noodles.

She tried to get up. Peter's leg crossed hers, and nestled warmly between her thighs. She pulled herself up a little. He didn't move, except his leg, drawing it a little farther up. She hated waking him. That wouldn't happen though. Not unless he had to go to the bathroom. And he did drink a lot of beer last night.

So what, she thought. She was hungry and wide awake now. And what if he did wake up? She rolled over, twisting her legs free of his. Peter stirred a little and settled in closer to her. Now she was jammed up against the wall. Dammit. Just wake him up, for Christ's sake.

Arabella thought about the other morning when he woke with a bad one, his mouth puckered dry, his eyes ballooned up like worn-out softballs. He gave her shit about it all day.

Her father was like that. Those Saturday and Sunday mornings before she was old enough to know why. She would forget; and yell and scream at her little brother when he changed the station; and her mother would try and try, frantically, shh! shh! to keep them quiet.

She lay there on her side for a while, thinking about her mother. Shh! shh! You'll wake your father up! Her mother. . . .

The blue in the air was lighter now. It washed everything in the room down to flat. Arabella curled up under the old comforter softened with her body's breath. She soaked up the warmth, felt it inside her, rolled gently around in its softness. It tingled a little, and then a little more, until she couldn't feel Peter; and the wall was a watered blue and then it wasn't there and Arabella saw a waterfall of darkness that covered her and kept her warm. . . .

It slashed her ears—a sharp, hard whack—and Arry shot up out of the comforter. She squinted with the sunlight that flooded the room. She felt the bunched-up dent in the sheet next to her. It was still warm. Arry looked at the clock. Nine thirty? That didn't seem right somehow.

The thing jolted her when it came, and then darted away, just as she reached for it. Dammit! she said out loud, groping for the dream. She pushed in on her temples. What was it? She hated the way they did that, every morning, her waking dream, jumping from her memory like a marionette snapped up by its strings in the hands of a jealous puppeteer.

She sat up in bed, the comforter sinking down around her middle. Dammit, she thought.

—J.D. Kleinke

Moving

I sweat
Fetch parakeet cribs
wooden spoons with holes in the middle
Carry Oklahoma State Flags
red begonia and tickly madagascar
love seats in the key of blue
ottomen in diapers
Bear lonely dresser legs
saggy rolls of plush green scratchy
carpets, you help
anguish my head won't leave me
alone here between dust
and chair legs I love, you
lug sleep sofas, hold the stuffing
and grimace
don't talk about it, just
hang on, let me open the door
okay now, I want you
Sorry not for sale or rent or ownership or
no-fault lease agreement
says no pets, love you can't depend on
me
pristine drape creases
all I want is—you
struggle up stairwells
with furniture and food unyielding
careful now
tread lightly
you can be my biceps but I
must keep this heart mur mur to
myself

—Laura Outerbridge



—Carl Channell

Ophelia

Come, let me into the whiteness
of the moon in this black water.
the water is cold
the moon cannot warm it

and i will be beautiful
my skin pale as moonshine

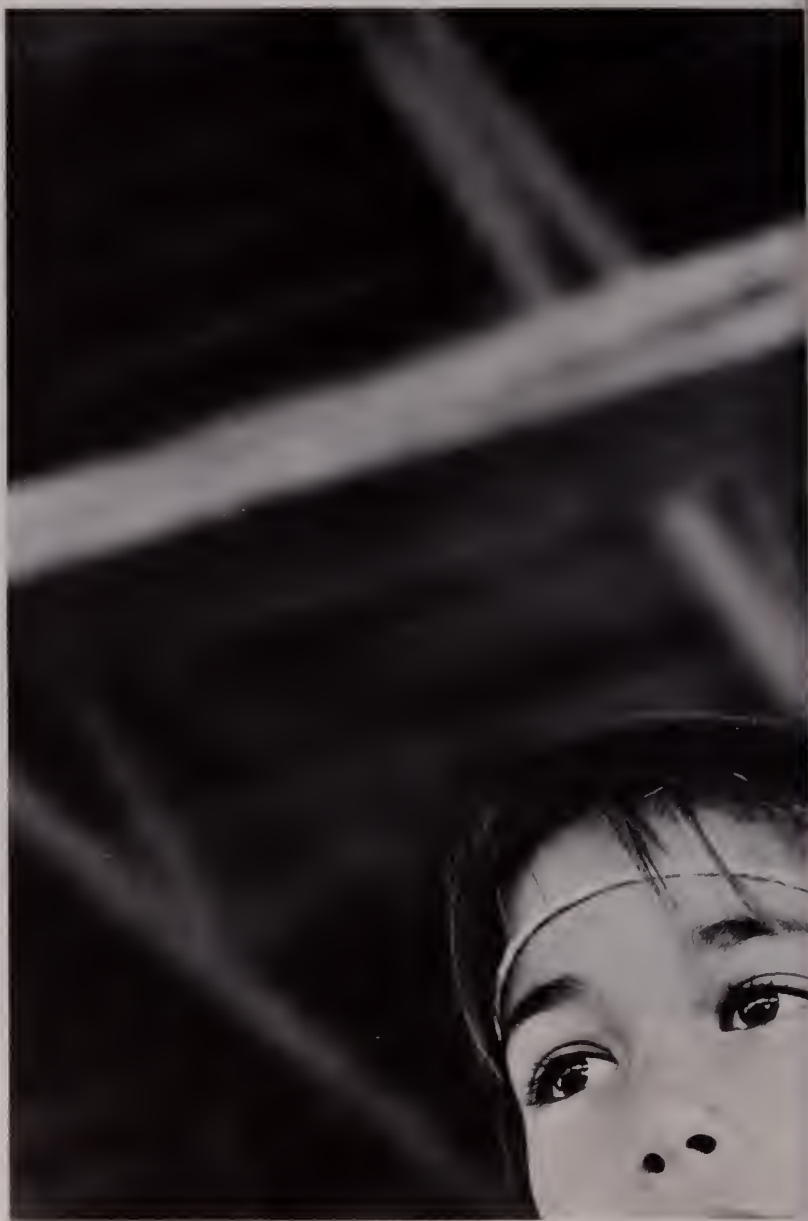
Come, they say it could be anything:
a hapless dagger
a poisoned goblet
a fever in the brain

do not think
do not think
and they will think it was only
flowers that i wanted

Come, they say it's only sleep
and they will find me here, floating
in dreams they can't remember

and you will love me again.
Come, it will be cold no longer

—*Ruth B. Felsen*



—Robert Zimmer

Car on the Other End of the Train

The first drop slid slowly down the plastic, beading its way zigzag along the tube until it entered Robin's body through the needle in her wrist. It was cool, almost cold. Soon the fluid was dripping steadily, and she looked away from the bloated, suspended bag, out the window at the cars that were scouting for empty meter spaces. The blue VW had been double parked waiting for a space ever since she had come in.

"Okay, I'm going to inject the rest now."

She saw Martine with the syringe out of the corner of her eye, but instead of watching the procedure, she concentrated on counting the cars outside, allowing herself to pick the ten that she would want most, if she could have any of them. The green Mazda would be one for sure; the brown Toyota that looked just like Blair's old one too; that waiting VW, which she'd give to Ellen because she was so wild about bugs would be three. . . . The syringe needle made a spongy sound as it was jammed into the lower stopper of the tube. It reminded her of the sound, no, the *feel* toothpicks made when she used to stab them into marinated artichokes for Mom's cocktail parties.

The newer, yellow fluid mixed in with the clear, and it burned as it went into her wrist. She could feel it trekking all the way up her arm, into her head, settling heavy in her stomach. It was a feeling she got when she ate too much chocolate.

She looked up at Martine, who was slowly, intently plunging the syringe into the tube stopper. Martine looked back at her. "Burning too much? Want me to slow down?" She raised her pencil-thin eyebrows until they were hidden under her limp bangs.

"It's okay, just plug it in. I don't want to get into rush hour again, last week I only got as far as K Street before it got me."

Martine half smiled at her, pushing the syringe until the plunger met the bottom, emptying the last of the chemicals into the I.V. tube. "Bet that was some fun. Who brought you in?"

"Mrs. Zielinski. Man oh man, you have to see her in action to believe it. I'm puking my guts out into that damn bucket, and she's shoving kleenex at me, jerking the car at every light, telling me it's all in my head. Car windows are all steaming up, and she's telling me I could stop barfing if I *really* wanted to."

Martine pressed a tissue to the stopper as she pulled out the needle, careful not to drip on anything. She adjusted the drip of the clear saline solution to let it flow faster, checked the needle in Robin's wrist to make sure it was still in the

vein, then leaned against the sink as the fluid continued to drip. She folded her arms across her chest and looked out the window and over the parking lot at the traffic that was already beginning to clog the streets.

"Yeah, well, she's a nurse." She wrinkled her nose and looked at Robin. "You know."

Robin nodded her head sideways. "I guess. It'll definitely be nice when Ian gets back though. I bet it's not his favorite way to spend an afternoon either, but I feel like less of a pain to him when he brings me in than anyone else."

"When's he coming back?"

"Two weeks. At last count, anyway. First I get this card from Arizona saying one week, then I get one from Texas saying two." She smiled. "He's probably having a blast. You watch, he'll have seventy-five rolls of film, and they'll just be pictures of people. No scenery, no poses of himself under the 'Welcome to whatever state,' or 'You're now leaving Bumfuck, Arizona' sign. Just people he met."

"When's your family moving back? Have they packed up yet?"

"Well, Ellen's coming back early. . . . Mom and Dad'll pack out the house sometime in March. I can't wait. This suitcase shit has got to go."

They looked out the window, scruitnizing the pattern of the traffic passing by. Martine chewed her lip. "Better have her go to Whitehurst, or you'll never make it in time."

Robin made a face. "Oh, right. *You* try telling her. God, I can just hear her now. 'Well, Miss, I was born in D.C., and I've been driving in it for five hundred and eighty something years. Save your traffic controlling for someone who needs it.' Hoo, no way. I'd much rather puke quietly into my little bucket than put up with that."

"You have a point there." Martine nodded in commiseration. Robin leaned back and closed her eyes. She thought of Ian. She wondered where he was, what he was doing exactly. Probably in some stereotypically western bar, sitting at a table with snake-skinned, rich old men, trying to convince them how much a Computrex 900 would save them a year in figuring out all the money they had. She could see his eyebrows darting the way they did with every inflection of his voice, actually see his sandy thick hair bobbing as his head did. And he was probably puffing away on a cigar, enjoying his chameleon charm every bit as much as the other men were.

She remembered the time they went to Nag's Head. Ian called her at the Zielinski's just as they'd finished up the Thanksgiving dishes, telling her he had his parents' house at the beach for a week, and would she like to go down. So of course when he came to pick her up, typical Ian, he had three of his buddies with him in the station wagon, waving at her and sticking their heads out the

windows. Mrs. Zielinski almost didn't let her go, spewing on and on about her white count, and how she couldn't be the one to call her parents to come home early for the funeral.

No sooner had they gotten on the Beltway, than Ian broke out a box of cigars, and everyone lit one up for good luck. By the time they pulled over to plug the TV into the car battery, her head was buzzing. No one had told her not to inhale. When they'd stopped to switch drivers, Ian sat next to her in the back. Nestled between him and Mike, who was slumped against the door, she'd thought she was in heaven. After a while she had rested her head on his shoulder, and he'd traced little circles on her elbow with his finger, his cheek resting on her head until she'd fallen asleep. Robin felt her blood warm with the memory.

"Rob, that's it," Martine repeated, "unless you'd like some more." She pulled the needle out of Robin's skin and pressed a bandaid over a piece of gauze on the spot left by the needle. Robin straightened up in the desk-like chair and rolled down her sleeve.

She didn't feel queasy until they were on New York Avenue. She twisted around and reached behind her seat for the little yellow bucket, but the seatbelt held her too tightly to reach it. Mrs. Zielinski would've had a heart attack if she unbuckled herself on New York Avenue, so she strained to get the bucket with it on before it was too late. The car jerked to a stop at a light, and Mrs. Zielinski grabbed the bucket. She put it at her left elbow next to the window, out of Robin's reach.

"Now Robin, you've been thinking about getting sick, that's why you feel you have to. This bucket is just a crutch for you. I read that little Teddy Kennedy didn't always get sick after his treatments because his father got his mind off it, and that's what we're going to do for you." The light turned green, and she punched the accelerator, slamming Robin down into her seat. "Now, let's think of something. Here, open your window a crack." She leaned over to open Robin's window, and the car edged over the dividing line. The car behind them honked. "There. Now you're *not* going to get sick. Remember that. You're *fine*."

Robin tried to wet her dry lips. In desperation she looked past Mrs. Zielinski at the bucket, which was stuffed between the woman's beefy arm and enormous breast. She felt the bile start to rise in her throat.

"Let's get you thinking of something." Mrs. Zielinski patted Robin's knee. "What about that boy you like so much. Ian. Think of Ian." She smiled with satisfaction at coming up with such a good subject.

The Pinto turned onto Route 50, and Robin thought of Ian's face, his teeth shining in a grin, as she threw up all over the dashboard.

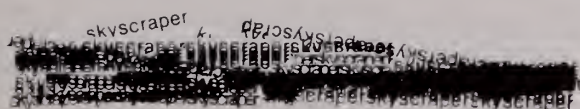
—Lesley Hall

Before and After the Blast

Part I.

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Part II.



—Jay Dougherty

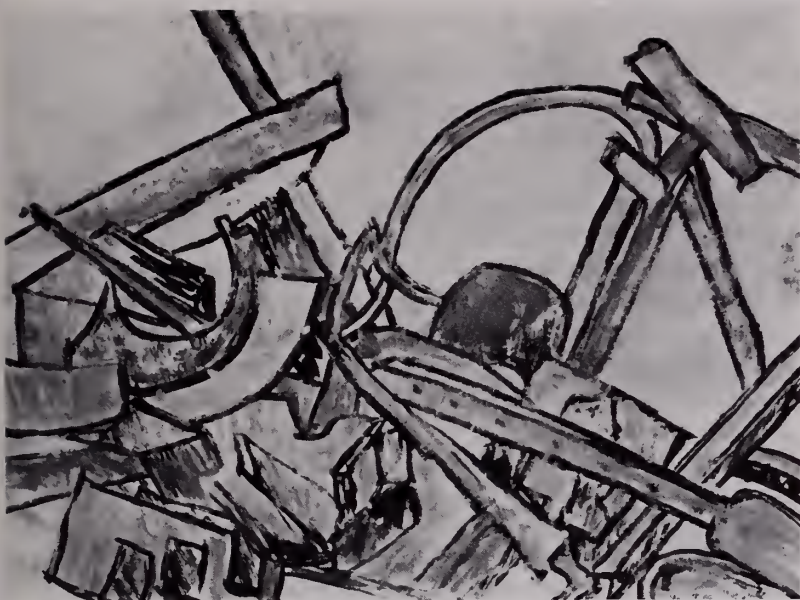
From the Roots Up

Is it warm
where you are now,
does your soup still steam
the windows, the broken
plants piled and waiting?

With numb hands
I watch the sky.
There is no one else
on this street.
This could not be
what I wanted:
I was sure
a thaw would come.

That night I told you
I would leave, the trees were
freezing from the roots up.
I didn't hear what
you said, the wind
was fierce against the panes.

—Susan Lity



—*Jackie MacMillan*

Clock Radio

"My, you have dressed nice," the waitress says. She has a strange, lilting accent and I have been meaning to ask her where she is from. Though she does not know my name and I don't know hers, I am familiar, almost a regular.

"Thank you. How about some of that good coffee," I say, teasing her. I put on my best clothes tonight: a shark gray, wool three piece suit—the only suit I own—and a striped tie, black shoes, and an overcoat that I bought from the Salvation Army for three dollars. The last time I wore the suit was three months ago, for an uncle's funeral. I bought it for my best friend's wedding, some months before that.

The place is deserted except for me. She brings me a mug of coffee. "You do take cream?"

"Please." I watch the vapor circle off the black surface of the coffee. The coffee here is always too hot to drink without cream. She thinks I am dressed up because it is Christmas day. Anyone who knows me would also think this because I do not wear suits often. The Little Tavern has no dress code. I have been nowhere today but home and I am going to my lover's house after I eat. I put on my suit tonight because lately I have begun to believe in miracles.

I stir cream into the coffee. She leans on her elbows on the counter a few feet from where I sit.

"Can I get you something else?"

"Yes. But I'm still thinking." I point to my head. The menu is simple and not much to think about, but lately I have been concerned with the importance of small decisions. All day I have been reciting to myself the details of a news article that I read the other day about a full oil tanker that sank off the horn of Africa. Sometime during the night, a small fire had broken out and was soon out of control. At dawn, the captain ordered all to abandon ship. Two sailors slept through the fire alarms and evacuation and awoke to find themselves alone on a burning, pilotless ship. They jumped into the water but the ocean was too rough and chilling to survive. One of the two made it back on board. He went to his berth and put on his finest clothes and stood on the deck, waiting, as he said later, to die. A helicopter spotted him standing on the stern rail, between the billowing, oily flames and the white-capped ocean. Soon after they rescued him, the tanker exploded and sank, spilling thousands of gallons of crude oil into the water. Asked about the ordeal, the sailor replied that "it was uncomfortably warm."

I sip coffee and smoke a cigarette. The coffee still steams. I watch her work beside the griddle, making hamburgers.

"Where are you from?"

"Guyana. It is a very small country. I do have doubt that you have never heard of it?"

"Oh, I know where it is. That's where Jonestown was."

"Yes!" she says, her eyes wide but unconcerned.

"Were you there when—"

"Oh yes. Yes. It was a very awful thing." She smiles, teeth very white, her skin a blazing copper color. She is short and fat and strangely alluring. We recite the chain of events and she describes the Guyanan point of view. Our talk is casual, easy; the incident dreamy with elapsed time. The thought of nine hundred people self-destructing makes me drowsy as I sip coffee and smoke my cigarette down.

"Oh yes, I love United States very much!" she says. Immigrants I ask always say that they love America. I wonder if they think I am a spy. If they are afraid of us.

"I think I'll have two jumbos. Cheese jumbos. Please hold the mustard. And pie. I'll have some of your French apple pie, please."

I have found myself coming here often. In the past week I have visited here six times. The food is not fantastic but I'm easy to satisfy. Many people refer to the hamburgers here as "death balls" or, more simply, "death." I am curious about this. "I'll gladly pay you Tuesday for a little death today," I think, watching the Guyanan woman roll little balls of red meat stippled with onions, placing each one in a long row. That is the secret of their burgers: the onions rolled into the meat and the long wait in the steel steam drawer under the counter.

She turns, opens the steam drawer, pushes back the wet towel and retrieves two jumbos for me. She melts the cheese on the griddle, putting half the soggy bun on top of the cheese. I smile. The ritual here is the same as at any of the other Little Taverns I have visited. I can imagine a map in the general manager's office of all the Little Taverns in the Baltimore-Washington area; each one a bright green square standing out from the chaotic grid of streets and parks.

She brings me my cheeseburgers on a piece of waxed paper, the pie on a white plate. I suffer from some of the usual Christmas problems. A vague depression comes over me in the middle of shopping malls, standing there surrounded by the grim hordes of shoppers clutching boxes and bags. I don't have much money and never know what to buy my loved ones. Store-bought presents always seem somehow inadequate and I am not skilled at making things. I have never told anyone this, but I have a perverse desire to rob the Salvation Army soldiers, not of their money, but of their bells.

Each Christmas season, the papers and T.V. news recount how lonely people grow most despondent during the holidays. The suicide rate leaps. People drink

more than usual. I'm not sure that I understand this. I like to be alone on the days preceding Christmas, today most of all. My father and his girlfriend went home to Kentucky. My mother and brother are eating at friends'. My girlfriend, who left me three days ago only to change her mind last night, is at home with her family. Everybody thinks that I am somewhere else.

"More coffee?"

"Please." We smile at one another. She fills my cup. I watch the coffee vapor tumble as I put in more cream.

When I was a teenager and we lived up county, I used to take long walks during the nights before Christmas, enjoying the freedom of school vacation. I would walk out across the hard stubble of the corn fields behind my house, imagining myself one of the Magi, albeit a stoned and somewhat bemused one. Some nights, swathed in layers of clothes, I lay on the frozen ground and gazed into the big winter sky hoping that maybe I too would see a star. Either I'm not wise enough, or the stars are always just themselves. Sometimes I imagined that I could feel the earth turning; that I was lying, held to the ground by gravity, looking down into the universe.

In Bethesda, where I live with my mother and brother, few stars can be seen. I walk less and sit more. A few people appear at the carryout window, opposite the the other end of the counter from where I sit. All I can see are Redskins caps with deep red balls on top and gloved hands trading money for white bags and green styrofoam cups. The bright lights leave shadows only under the stools and the small space under the cigarette machine. The windows are mirrored because it is night and the back hallway is a sharp opening of darkness.

There is something to be said for a place that never closes, bus stations and airports excluded. There the pace is quick; people are either going somewhere or waiting anxiously for someone's arrival. The people who come to The Little Tavern come to eat or to wait. I eat so that I can wait. Some people wait in bars, I have learned, but they often become alcoholics. My uncle Claude, who was the town drunk for twenty years before becoming sober, used to pull me aside at family gatherings and, in his wheezy, toothless voice, would say: "Boy, our people got a weakness for likker. Watch out." He was right, we do. Lately I am careful. No one who waits in The Little Tavern will become an alcoholic.

I hear the glass door open. An elderly man stalks in. He is very well dressed. He stops at the counter and turns and peers at me.

"Do you hear them?" he asks in a foreign accent that I cannot quite place.

"Sure, I hear them."

He cocks his head like a wild turkey, his eyes wide and urgent. He looks at the woman.

"Can I help you, sir?" she asks, her voice unsure.

"The Russians," he cackles, falling silent. He turns his head quickly towards me. "The missiles. They have sent the missiles." He points at the ceiling and smiles. I strain, thinking that I can almost hear the sound of water over rocks. She looks at me, puzzled. I smile at her, then at him. He turns around, on the balls of his feet, with military precision, and glides out the door. All I hear is the whoosh of the door and the hum of neon all around.

The Guyanan woman and I look at one another. "What he want?" she says huffily, shrugging her shoulders as if to say, "Brother, do we get all kinds in here!" Indeed, they do. We both laugh. She tells me about a woman that comes in every morning who claims she is John the Baptist.

The man appears at the side window. It is difficult to see him because of the mirror effect of the lights. Looking at him, I see myself sitting at the counter, as if I were right beside him. He steps closer, almost against the glass, his breath fogging the window. His gold tie clasp gleams. He begins to wave his arm slowly, wistfully, as people do on the decks of departing ships or looking back from the stairways to airplanes. He steps back and fades from sight, the window again an almost perfect mirror.

He comes back in. "What did she say about me?" he demands, pointing at the place where the woman had been standing. The phone had rung and she had gone back to answer it. He points at her place as if she were still there. He cocks his head as though trying to catch a faint sound and I wonder if I should ask him if he, too, loves America.

"Oh her," I say instead, nodding. "She hears them too."

"She hears them, too," he says, grinning. His teeth are real and very white.

I turn on the stool and face him. "Merry Christmas," I say. He comes over and shakes my hand, gripping my forearm tightly with his other hand.

"God bless you," he whispers. His eyes are bright and alert. He releases my hand and goes out the door. The winter air that slips in feels as fresh and icy as spring water. I turn back to the counter and finish my pie. The woman appears and I pay her, leaving two quarters on the counter.

"Thank you. Have a happy Christmas," she says.

"O.K., you have one too."

"I will try." She rolls her eyes. She does not get off work until eleven. Her partner did not show up tonight and that was probably her on the phone, calling in sick.

Outside, the elderly man is nowhere to be seen. I assumed that he had been waiting for the bus. I fumble in my coat for a cigarette. The bus pulls up and I wave it on. There are only two people on the bus besides the driver. Since it is Christmas, the bus comes every hour instead of every twenty minutes.

Eight-thirty on Saturday night and Wisconsin Avenue is nothing but dark

smooth concrete. I walk down the sidewalk towards Chevy Chase, my footsteps echoing off the buildings and street. I can't remember ever hearing my footsteps echo on Wisconsin Avenue, but I like it. It is one more cause for wonder. The sky, sodden and sooty, smells like snow. The two mile walk to Jackie's house passes quickly. I have always preferred walking whenever possible. My car died two weeks ago and I do not grieve. I refused to get my license until I was twenty, and got it then only after I finally realized that women do not like to walk on dates. Even further, to not have a license was downright queer. Men are supposed to drive and have cars, preferably sleek, fast ones.

Jackie, though, doesn't care. She greets me at the door of her house, dressed in a tight, black jumpsuit that shows off her nice shape. Her eyes are big and green, framed by her reddish bangs. We kiss. She smiles. She is eighteen years old and I love her.

"You look nice. I don't think I've ever seen you in a suit. I want to take some pictures."

She leads me by my hand into the living room. Her parents gave her a fancy camera for Christmas. I gave her an electronic flash to go with it. She bought me a sweater and a chamois shirt to keep me warm. The winter has been predicted to be colder than usual. She tells me that she has been practicing taking pictures all day.

I stand and pose by the mantle.

"Com'on smile! Act natural," she says, waving her thin arm.

I shift, smile, trying to act natural but can't. The flash's brightness surprises me. Purple dots jump around as I move my eyes. She takes a few more of me then I take one of her. I find that I like taking pictures. It is easier than I thought it would be.

"How about a drink?"

"Ok, sure."

"Okey dokey," she says, making her eyes bulge. I smile at her silliness.

She goes into the kitchen to make drinks and I go out on the porch and get wood for a fire. Jackie is an aspiring artist and a freshman at a fine art school in New York City. Naturally, at her age, time and place have changed her. She had an affair this fall she described as "ridiculous." She is unhappy with her school because, among other things, most of the male students are gay.

I have also changed. I graduated from the local state college two weeks ago with a degree in General Studies. Last Thursday, I was fired from my job as a clerk in a used-book store for stealing. In less than two months, I stole over three hundred books. Of course, I have a nice library now. When I was caught, though, I was stealing books that did not interest me in the least. Books on welding, water divination, *How to Live on Natural Foods*, a late nineteenth

century treatise arguing the merits of Christian Science over pantheism, *The Field Guide to North American Wildlife*, and so on. With the exception of meeting Jackie, I feel I have drifted through the last five years of my life.

My mother asks me every day about my career hopes. I lie and read the classifieds at the table. My favorite ones are the ones that say: "I, Donald Morgenson, am not responsible for debts incurred by anyone other than myself."

We sit on the floor, amid all the scraps of wrapping paper and presents. The tree towers over us, brightly lit. We sip our drinks and listen to jazz on the radio. The rotten wood flames and most of the heat escapes up the chimney of their big old house. The house is chilly because Jackie's mother is frugal with the heating oil. I like to look into the fire with Jackie.

The family dog, a miniature collie named Billy Boy, comes into the room. He sees the fire and stops in the middle of the floor.

"Come here Billy B.," I say, my arms held out. The dog moves slowly towards us, his mouth closed. Jackie and I stroke the dog, our backs to the fireplace.

"It's so depressing," Jackie says to Billy Boy, holding his head in her hands. His eyes are big and search our faces nervously. Jackie's father, a consultant for Shell Oil, has taken a job in Brazil. The family will move in two weeks, after Jackie and her younger brother go back to school.

"Inky's been hiding in the basement. He won't even come up to my room."

Inky is their cat. I wonder how the animals will feel going from the deep of winter to the tropical summer in one day. Unlike people, animals are sane and sensitive.

"They'll get used to it," I say, trying to reassure her. Billy Boy sticks out his paw and I shake it. "It'll be a quick trip," I tell both of them.

"Yeah, I know. But they're so upset. Inky won't eat. It's funny how *they* know. But then again, Mom and Dad have been upset too," she sighs. Billy Boy, finally unnerved by the crackling fire, retreats to the kitchen where the linoleum is cool and the room dark.

I put my hands on her shoulders and we kiss. I push her over gently and lie on top of her, kissing her neck.

"You've been so understanding. I mean, I've been so mixed up and all—with the moving and then Bobby and falling for his old line again. And school . . ."

"I know. Don't worry." We used to have long, rambling conversations, talking for hours. Lately, all I can say are things like: "How are you?" "What is wrong?" "I love you" "Let's do it" "OK" "Yes." I want to tell her about the old man and the missiles but don't.

"I know you know. Thanks. Hey baby, let's go upstairs."

"Okey dokey," I say, mouthing the words deliciously.

Her room is on the third floor. She says "Auggggh," as we walk in the door. I'm not sure if she is referring to the cold—the radiators do not work up here—or the bareness of her room. The walls are a pale, even white where once they had been covered with spontaneous works of art, tapestries, photographs. Last week she said: "I just can't stand the thought of some bitch living in *my* room. This is *my* room!"

Tonight she goes into the bathroom without a word. A Finnish diplomat and his family have rented the house. The family's servant girl, also Finnish, will live up here. I wonder if she is big and blonde. If she will have lovers on summer nights. If she loves America too.

I put the electric heater inside her bedroom—a low ceilinged, long closet adjacent to the main room. It is the only room habitable now, though the heater barely warms its small space. The room is big enough for a queen-sized mattress, a small dresser, and a few feet of floor space usually strewn with clothes.

She comes in and shuts the door, leaving it cracked for the cord of the heater. When the heater is on, the cord gets soft and hot and smells of burning plastic. I fear fire and always remind her to turn it off when she leaves or sleeps. She laughs, thinks I am silly, but lately I have noticed that she has become cautious also. We sit, a blanket around our shoulders, the orange glow of the heater lighting our faces. I sip a new drink and Jackie fills her pipe carefully. When we first met, last June, both of us had given up smoking pot. In the fall, she started again, claiming that it gave her inspiration. She passes the pipe to me and I take a small lungful.

After the pipe is finished, I undress her slowly. She lies on her stomach, parallel to the square heater, and I sit on her thighs, a blanket over my shoulders and one over her legs. I knead her body from the flat hard space below her hairline to the smooth muscles of her thighs. I reach behind and rub her calves and crack her toes. I am uncomfortable: one leg is too close to the heater and the hairs on my ankle feel like they could ignite; my other leg is out in the cold. I turn her over and continue to rub and push her skin. Then I lie down, my whole body except for my head and chest out of the heater's small radius. I feel her steadily warm. She begins to quiver like a speaker cone, her voice whispering. I feel that everything is going to be alright.

Later, I sit and smoke cigarettes and stare into the heater while Jackie sleeps under blankets on the floor. Making love in front of the heater has become a ritual as the weather has grown cold. In the summer, we did it everywhere: on the floors, the couch in the other room, in the old bathtub with four little feet, on the desk, inside, outside, late at night in swimming pools. Now it's down to one small room—a hot little island left over from the vast plain of summer. Our

time together has condensed too; a weekend in Manhattan, a weekend here, a weekend or two apart. We notice things about one another that we took for granted in the summer.

I have discovered that Jackie loves three things: her work, sex and new adventures, though I'm not sure in what order. And, of course, she loves me, but again, I'm not sure exactly where I fit. She juggles the things she loves like a carny con man does his hard little walnut shells. I admit I can't keep up with her changes, but I have patience. I believe her when she says: "I may stray, but I always come home to papa."

A beautiful tenor saxophone version of "Somewhere Over The Rainbow" is playing on the clock radio. The digital face reads two o'clock. Christmas is over. I have formulated the usual new year's resolutions: to quit smoking, not drink as much, grow up, be cheerful and optimistic. Jackie and I have another week before she goes back to school.

I wake her and we put on thermal underwear. While she straightens the bed, I go to the bathroom and brush my teeth. My breath comes out in swirling tufts. I rush back into the bedroom and get in bed, so cold I begin to shiver. Jackie comes back from the bathroom and gets under the covers with me. I lie on my back, she on her side, an arm and leg over me. I feel her moist breath on my cheek.

"I don't know what's been the matter with me. I really do love you. You make me so happy."

"Yes," I say, looking at the streetlights shining in the window.

"Next summer," she says dreamily. She kisses me on my cheek and hunkers down into her pillow. Her kiss is a cold spot on my face. The room hasn't cooled down yet and there are too many blankets on us. I am uncomfortably warm. From where I lie, I can see out the partially frosted window. The sky has cleared some. A setting crescent moon hangs above the dark tree tops and colors the clouds steely-blue as they pass swiftly around and over it. A faint star appears from behind a swath of blue cloud. It's hard to tell what is moving, the moon and the star, or the clouds. She is leaving me.

Jackie rolls over, already asleep I think, and a shaft of winter air cools the small space between us. I roll on my side and put my hand on her hip and listen to her measured, swelling breath and wait for sleep.

—Glenn Moomau



—Ana Lazo

Light

A sour, fragile ring of men's eyes
and the twit of the cricket that sears
the gesture of the night,
the fingers flicker once into
the black, then turn to sleep.

Tall enough to trip into
sun's spots on marble
floors; low enough to tear the seam
of the evening out and lay it
on the butcher's block, it curls
in the belly of thunder.

Light is the aspiration of
coral creeping, fingers spread,
toward the faded tension of
water and air, and the
people who feel hand over hand
along the wall, to touch the
smooth, unsmiling face of the window.

A ring of many stones, one
color for each glance, each
tinny beat in the ear. It
whirls around on its own
glint, it pares the sun.

—*Laura Dickinson*

Medea

I too know such rages.
have witnessed the moment
of shaking the child, suspended
over the crib, its chest yielding
as butter to the knives of my fists—
have seen the whiplash on the cheek
the redness that spreads like a vein,
brings me to my knees in fright
the creeping and weeping
rebuilding out of silence
hands twisting and untwisting
the vile possibility.

oh sweet vengeance, curdled milk
in my nervous breast, drowning me
from inside,
I know madness, the rupture of the dropped
melon, hands held over the ears
that other voice using my own
the baby's blue face hung like a mirror
across my sight
shrunk back to my own foetal gestures
the twisting and untwisting
of the brain.

(and oh I *wanted* sweetness
moonlight on a path
roses opening silently
rocker on the porch, wisteria scent
in the air, light soft as snow)
but blood blueblack at the edges
scratches down my thighs
(oh how I wanted sweetness
a mint on the tongue)

Would that I were the poet *you* were
had your sorcery, I could mangle
limb by limb this imprisoned Fury
wrench pain from the poor
wrought bones like water from a rag.
You must clutch me tightly across the centuries
together we will wring out the poison juice
our babies will rise
scarless as morning
there will be light like breath on our cheeks.

—*Betty Bernard*



—J. Barry Messer

The Party's Over

The delicate cruelty of 2 AM. Its gloat
its cat's paw
smearing humans into sweat and ash
like bees into their own honey.
It's foggy tonight.
The street lights have cataracts
and the sharp edges of buildings run
like ink on wet paper.
Even the witless bravado of an 80 proof laugh
is entirely too mortal to hold
this mist to innocence.
It's impassive as ice out here
and knuckles burrow deeper in thin pockets
wanting only the flow of their own blood.
This is what I listen for. This and the quiet
knife of words turning with surgeon's purpose
between the shutdown of night
and the break-in of day. Turning
in a hollow cage.
A bottle screams
as its sparkling spine shatters
on some curb's unnatural stone.
The rats flinch but I am still
too tired, waiting for nothing,
too empty to ever fill
at the board of these lean
vulturine hours.

—*Shelly Hall*



—Gerry Hinds

Olden Slumbers

"You are how you sleep,"
I will tell my grandchildren,

having laid my head,
still yet wandering
(like a globe)
on many pillows,
having slept with
women, angels, devils
(even stuffed animals),
having camped
underneath the moon
(she was my lover)
with fire by my side,
having endured nights
without falling to sleep
(or sometimes without pajamas),
having occasionally
paid for a night's sleep
(and taken the towels),
having rested with
silence and music
sickness and health
food in my belly
kisses on my cheek
monsters in my head
(eyes shut tight),
having arrived a little
less naive every morning,
yet still wondering
how many more chances I get
(to wake up).

"So dream all that you want,"
I will add
(I will multiply).

—W.R. Tish

I Have Heard

I have heard them all yes heard them all already
Yet go daily
For more and more of a moreness that is like a
Jackal etherized within a tapedeck
While from under the stage comes the voice of the ghost that sa
Swear kid
To listen not no more not nevermore
To all that more

It's lead in your bad ear dear
Hear?

Have heard them all yes heard them all and sit
Way way down in my bone house boning up
On whether 'tis nobler in mind to suffer the more
From the Federal Reserve or the evening Reagan

Peace good pint pot prithee

So the pint pot heads for the peace above the tree line
And walks in the mild soft blue of an old glacier
Like a cephalopod etherized upon

but boy

Says the garrulous glacier

What in the sam hill does you think you is listening at
With those great big ears of yours stuck out like that?

—Reed Whittemo



—John Carlson



—Stephen Young

Gold-Eyed Lacewing

Papa digs holes for a living. That is what he calls it—digging holes. He operates a backhoe for our town. This summer the Public Works is laying new water and sewer lines about two blocks from our house. Paulie and I see Papa almost every day on our way to the municipal pool. This afternoon we wave from across the street for a long time until Papa sees us. When he does, he hooks his big hairy arm for us to come over for a closer look.

We clamber to the top of a broad mound of gummy red dirt, thickly caking our shoes with the excavated earth. I do not like the way it weights my feet down, and I do not like the way it will make my brown oxfords more noticeable. I do not like the hole in the ground, and I do not like the rotting smell it makes with the midday sun pounding on it. I smile as hard as I can anyhow, standing there in my skirted swimsuit and oxfords watching my papa at work.

He pulls a lever. The big, hinged stick on the boom falls. Grinding, crunching, and scraping sounds override everything. The machine rips up chunks of grass, red dirt, fallen branches. Papa pulls a lever. The toothed bucket draws toward him. Papa pulls a lever. The bucket spews out its contents in one great release.

My lab group rises. Our chairs scrape on the dark, unwaxed floor. We scuttle sideways down the narrow aisle. It is our turn to file past the project model. A large white box about three feet square stands on end against the wooden microscope cabinet. Inside it is a grid marked out in heavy lines of India ink. *Insects* is stencilled in red at the top. There are mothballs taped into each corner. "Insects" is a word I have learned to use just this week. Insects often play an important economic role in society, Miss Brown says. *Bugs* are vermin, she says.

"The best way to control vermin is to keep the female from laying eggs."

Centered in each uniform space is an insect. *Lepidoptera*, the column of butterflies and moths is marked. *Odonata* is another column. *Coleoptera*, *Hymenoptera*, *Orthoptera*.

"The insects are classified by orders," Miss Brown is saying. I shuffle past. I get the impression of stiff postures, starched wings, rigid abdomens, stark eyes. Everything seems fixed—firm—in orders.

At my desk, I try to tell Stuart how it makes me feel. Or doesn't make me feel. "I didn't feel anything," I say. "I hate bugs—*insects*," I correct myself, "but these didn't even make me sick or scared or anything."

He just looks at me over his glasses.

"I mean I didn't get goose bumps or anything. *I didn't feel anything*," I insist.

"It's called 'scientific detachment,'" Stuart says. "It's what Miss Brown means when she says scientists need to be objective."

"Yeah, well, then I don't want to be a scientist. That's for sure. It's like being numb or paralyzed or something. If that's being objective, I don't want to be it. I even felt better when bugs made me sick."

Paulie's face is red and running with sweat. He is softly banging the heel of his hand against his forehead. I am slumped in the opposite corner of the back seat. Even with all the windows down, the heat hits us in waves. I have just stopped crying. I cannot tell whether tears are still streaming with Paulie's sweat or not. He does not wipe his face. A green pick-up truck pocked with rust has pulled between the Chevy where we are and the low concrete road house where Mama and Papa have been for I don't know how long. I think this is their longest time ever. We are on our way home from Farmer's Market.

"Shit," Paulie says. "This is it. I'm gonna run away."

I focus on the *shit*. I have heard the rest before. I sit straight up. "Umm," I shame him. "You cussed. I'm tellin'."

"Yeah, well go ahead," he spits at me and turns quickly toward his window. He is not quick enough. I see the fear flicker in his round, brown eyes. When Papa jack-lights animals on the road with his high beams at night, their eyes look like that, just before they run.

I stare at the turquoise vinyl of the front seat. I trace the sharp-toothed tear in it with my eyes. It reminds me of something. Maybe it is the square root sign. I look up through the windshield and across the highway. I see the darkening network of trees against the heavy blue sky.

In a minute, I say low, "I mean it. I'm tellin'. I'm tellin' Papa."

He whirls, lunges through the space dividing us. He grabs my wrist. He twists. He is shaking his head. It moves in quick, tight little arcs—back and forth. "Hunh-uh," he says. "No. You do and I'm gonna crack your wrist." He twists again.

I am not dumb. I will not hit back. Even Paulie. "Let go," I plead. "It hurts."

"It's supposed to." He tightens his grip. "You gonna tell? Huh?"

"No!" Then, "I promise."

"Say it."

"I won't tell."

"Not that. The *word*. Say the word and prove it."

"I can't," I cry. My chest is hurting, inside.

He jerks my arm behind my back hard. He twists. Both hands. Twists. "What do you mean you can't? You cuss. I know you do."

My wrist, my arm, my neck, my back are all compressed. They are one shrieking lump of fire. "Aaai!" I scream. "I won't go to heaven, Paulie," I sob. "If I say it, I won't go to heaven."

He stops. Shoves me backwards. Stares at me. "Who says?" he asks. "They don't keep you out of heaven for something as dumb as that. Who says?" he demands again. "You gotta take the Lord's name in vain—that ain't what I did."

I rub my wrist, my arm. I look out at the distant trees. Somehow, I think, I have won. It is somewhere in the words. I am really sore where Paulie twisted, but he is sore too, I think. It is worse than a twisted arm.

The bald-headed man who owns the pick-up has come out. He opens the passenger door and slides a case of Ballentine onto the floor of his truck. He catches Paulie's eye and leans into the Chevy. We breathe the heavy fumes of Old Spice and scotch. He smells like Papa. He nods toward the truck. "Survival kit for the blizzard," he says. We laugh little laughs and he leaves. He smells just like Papa, I think again.

His truck crunches across the gravel and out onto the highway. Inside the car there is another thick silence. Outside there are a couple of hesitant crickets, and every once-in-a while I hear a thin, tinny pitch high on the air. It is the juke box's electric guitar music seeping through the pores of the road house and into the parking lot.

"Shit," I say. The word jumps through the air. I laugh, feeling good. I look at Paulie. I scoot next to him on the seat. I prod his scabby knee with a dirty finger. "Shit," I repeat.

"Shit," he says and grins.

Today we watched Papa at work. Tonight he brings home a gallon of madeira and a fifth of scotch. Paulie and I wash and dry the supper dishes. We sing "He's Got The Whole World In His Hands" in rounds. Paulie has a better voice than I do. Mine sounds like Mama's.

Papa is moving back and forth between the kitchen and the front door. He picks up two chrome chairs. *Whap* goes the screen door behind him. Out he goes with the wine in one hand and a metal tray of jelly glasses in the other. The jug has a finger loop, but Papa's forefinger is too big for it. He grasps it by its neck. The screen door goes *whap*. Mama stands at the two-burner gas stove. She gives alternate shakes to the tall aluminum kettles on both rings. Buttery popcorn smells rise through the air. Papa squeezes through, his guitar held high above his head. *Whap*. I hold the high brown grocery sack open while Mama pours the fluffy grain into it. Papa flicks some biscuit crumbs from the red plastic seat of one of the chairs. They hit the side of the sack with a *pit, pit* sound. Papa lifts the chairs. *Whap*. The salt whispers in the bottom as we carry

the sack outside.

The porch light is a naked bulb, but the wattage is low. Moths and mayflies swirl and flutter in its light. Beyond the low cement slab is a patch of grass, a ribbon of sidewalk, and the street. The small, squat houses—identical except for colors—are arranged in mirror images of each other along its length. Gayle and Evonne Higginbotham sit on two of the four chrome chairs. Gayle digs holes for a living too. Evonne, like Mama, keeps house for her husband. The two women do not call themselves housewives.

"Oh, I don't work," Mama always says to our doctor's receptionist. "I keep house."

"It's a full-time job to keep Gayle's house," Evonne says to Mama over late afternoon glasses of wine at our brown, enamel-topped kitchen table.

Papa takes a long swallow of scotch. He adjusts the pegs on his big black guitar. He plucks each string, testing it. He adjusts. Plucks. I sit on the stoop. He strums idly for a few minutes. Paulie dumps two handfuls of popcorn into the outspread skirt of my green plaid dress. Then two more. Then he sits beside me. We lean into the night and the music. We munch popcorn from my lap. Papa sings "There's An Old Spinning Wheel In The Parlor." He sings low, his voice rich and deep. We applaud and Paulie says, "Sing 'Galway Bay.'" Papa pours a second scotch, lights up an Old Gold and sings "Galway Bay" in a full Irish brogue. Together he and Gayle sing "Mockingbird Hill." Evonne yodels the chorus. Mama pours more wine and scotch.

The evening wears on. Paulie and I get quieter and quieter and sit very still. It is almost two hours past our eight o'clock bedtime, and we do not want to draw attention to ourselves. The popcorn is gone. The amber liquids are low in their bottles. Mama is singing her sixth or seventh verse of "Barbara Allan." She is singing without the guitar, and she is singing off key.

Evonne bends down and picks up the wine jug. "How're ya fixed for blades?" she asks Mama. Mama shakes her head and holds up a half-full glass.

"Son of a bitch almost fired ya, ya know," Gayle is saying to Papa.

Papa coughs like a bark and says, "Nah!" Then he gives me and Paulie the hitchhiker's thumb. "Go to bed, kids."

"Yessir," we say. We stand. I brush the salt from my lap. We start forward for good-night kisses.

"Ya can't fuck around," Gayle is saying. "Ya can't fuck around on the job."

Papa jumps up. His chair crashes to the ground. "I mean now!" he roars. Mama stops singing. Papa smacks Paulie full on the face. *Whap*. He grabs my hair. Hard. His fingers tangle themselves around in it. He yanks me toward Paulie. We slam into each other. He shoves us at the house. We cry and stagger through the screen door. Papa has turned back. He says good-naturedly to

Gayle, "Ah, shaddup, bud. We got us some serious drinking to do." *Whap.*

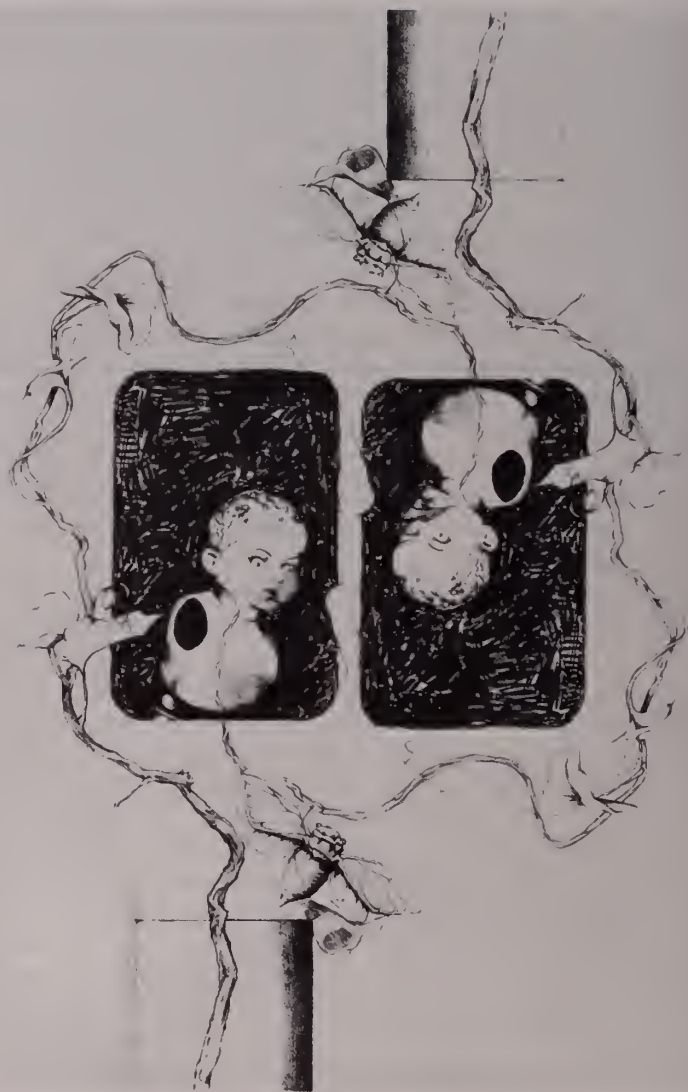
"This is a death chamber," Miss Brown says. She holds up a sparkling clean Skippy peanut butter jar. Everyone in class laughs.

We gather around her big science table. She stuffs the bottom of the jar with a wad of cotton. "This is carbon tetrachloride," she says, displaying a slender bottle with a skull and crossbones label on it. *Caution!* the bottle reads. *Carbon Tetrachloride. Keep Away From Face.* She unstoppers the bottle. Foul, sulphurous fumes steal my breath. I gasp, and gag.

Miss Brown smiles at me. "Yes, it is strong, Pammy. Maybe you should move back a little more."

She quickly pours some of the poison onto the cotton and stoppers the bottle. She fits a round of cardboard down into the jar, over the cotton. It fits snugly. She spins the jar lid on.

—Dawnelle Loiselle



—Michael Clark



—*Mary Welby Whiting*

Invitation to the Dance

No, don't look. Just raise the lid enough
to slide your hand in, touch the jumbled inside
darkness, finger shapes and edges. Good.
You found it: oddly curved and smooth, its holes
and hollows shag your curiosity. You may

look now. Take it out: a black silk mask, half-
face. In its edge the needle threaded red.
Pierrot. Stitch it to your face, where it will
beckon up a partner from the tapestry.

Not satisfied? Reach in the box again.
Lift out the earring tangled in the white
spider's web, night caught in tarnished ornament.
Its filigree will fetch the mask,
swing silver as you pirouette
to catch and throw the candlelight.

Now. Complete the costume; hang the spider
here, beside the mask's left eye,
a beauty spot.

And now you'll dance,

now in the box there's nothing left beside
the cricket that you knew was there,
rubbing a small song
to make your music.

—*Verlyn Flieger*

Leonardo

I can tell you how the light will fall
Against those trees at the first hour of day,
How the horizon will break rose-flushed with clouds
And the white houses in the east will be scarcely visible.

I confess that I have followed condemned men
To the gallows, my notebook under my cloak,
To study their faces, distorted by fear.
Yet I grow impatient with the brush.

I have heard my townsmen whisper when I pass:
He cannot finish his paintings; he is afraid.

When I filled the cleaned intestines of sheep
With air from a blacksmith's bellows
Till the room burst with transparent blossoms,
They did not understand the emptiness.

And they wonder at her smile—I must laugh.
I searched for that secret in the flight of birds,
Watched the black wings beat the air about me.
I am unsatisfied.

I wake too early in the darkness.
Insomniac, I light a candle in a circle of mirrors.
I know now the sun does not move.

—Saundra Maley

Dart Night

Pointed sticks of tungsten and nickel
spotlights bright from the ceiling
shooting circles round the target
bristle and colour

To think of the ring of the board
as a face
A thief who has stolen my wife
and touched her
where my hands once prayed
to the flow of living things

Hurl in gunfight the shaft
watch the flight dart
lodge its point
into his eyes and away

My wife back to hug me
and sing in my ear the praises of love
and darts

—Tom Whit

For Emma Livry

Someone told me later how it started, with her shaking her skirts out in the wings, the tulle grazing the tips of two gas lamps that marked her entrance. When she reached the stage the flames were to her knees. Someone yelled that running would make it worse, but she ran into the aisles where no one thought to beat the fire out. Then she stopped two rows in front of me, a gold and scarlet ring settling in around her waist, pressing the thin ribs up to crack the sylphide from her skin. I closed my eyes, felt my way into the street. Each of us

has a story to tell now, of how we watched the dancer Emma Livry burn alive in the role she'd known since she was twelve; people want to hear about her face. I talk instead of layer upon layer of fine white net consumed because there was too much air between them, and how her arms clung to the space above her head, the last to follow. And I remember her first step, coming out of the dark sides, one satin foot that pointed, hesitating beneath the flames, seeming even then to make its preparation.

—*Rose Solari*



—Paul Souders

There Can Be Breakages in Japanese A Love Story

Well I guess so. Why did I have to stand in the door a whole minute. She, her back, not moving. Well. Does it matter? Did she say anything? It was a whole quiet minute standing in the door. No. Closed it quietly, no noise. Will she wait a whole hour waiting for it to slam? I think she'll sit staring at those apples forever like a store window dummy. Amelia. What a name. Will she be lost in flights of fancy? Amelia. Ear. Heart. Listen: ker thump ker thump it goes. Like a door.

But oh well, isn't everything for the best after all. How the saying goes—best of all possible worlds. Yes. "Everything is for the best in this the best of all possible worlds." I said that. What did she say then? Remember.

I remember she was in sunlight!

Melodrama. What a scene it makes: a meaning-freighted landscape: you know well it was in sunlight you saw her. Yes, I stood in the door and didn't say anything. Me in the shadows you see. Dusk. Dark and doom. Sunlight low through the window. (How long are you going to stay leaning against this door?) A visual separation caused by New York turning away from the sun. You see. You see that there. Oh god. What an argument. A fight. What a fool. I am. Oh she shouted! And raged. I called her an aviatrix bitch. I said she wouldn't know an inflection from a phoneme. I said supernovas are better than grammars any day. She said something about throttling down and putting down the flaps. You see that there was a reason to leave. There was. There is. Amelia, I'm sorry. I can't. Look: there I go, I'm leaving, I'm walking across the porch, between the yews, across the lawn, over to the car, getting in, driving away. Her keys. Damn. And too far to walk. I should've duplicated them. My god what if she's watching me stand here like a fool in front of her door. Her beady, buggy little eyes, how you'd like to pop them out of her skull like grapes! She should've given me her keys. Should. She should have.

An Apple

There are four green apples in the yellow basket on the table. One has a crushed leaf still attached to the stem. One has no stem. They are Granny Smith apples. They are too sour to eat, but Amelia bought them because she liked the name.

A Basket

The basket the apples are in is yellow. It is woven of thin reeds, Amelia bought it at a market in Annapolis, she paid sixty-five cents. She found a spraycan of Canary Yellow in the basement of her mother's house. Two years later when she bought the apples she put them in it.

Biochemistry

Japanese is a left-branching language.

Amelia is looking at the green apples in the yellow basket. She is thinking of how she got the yellow paint on her hands and it did not wear off for two days. She wore her mother's white, too small gloves to her sister's wedding because of that.

Now she is thinking of how the apples taste.

* * *

It was October. The northern hemisphere was beginning its annual lean away from the sun. The light that lifted through the bedroom windows mornings was whiter and came later. The air would be so clear days that you could look out over Ithaca from campus and see almost individual leaves orange and brown on the hills across the lake. The lake too was clear in the clear light, although Amelia knew the water must be too cold to swim in. At night the valley and the hills were all distant lights in the cold as she looked out from Cascadilla bridge or the library windows, the lake dark to the north. It was like that in the fall.

Amelia would work on the house, stripping eight and more layers of paint off of the bedroom doors or repainting the walls white or hanging the paintings of birthday cakes she'd bought from a friend's friend; or she would work on her doctors thesis, looking out the panes of ripply glass at the night. She wanted to strip the windows to the bare wood, but the thought of the eight layers of paint on the narrow sashes kept her from it. Her thesis was not going well. She liked to drink port with nutmeg while Michael's stereo played Satie, Stockhausen, or sometimes Schoenberg. She had talked Michael into moving his stereo to her house because she would play it more. Sometimes she felt as if everything were on a free, two week, no obligation trial period; tentative. The house had been her grandmother's. Once Michael had told her that the sun makes energy by making hydrogen nuclei into helium nuclei, and that if the process were to stop suddenly no one would be able to notice a difference for ten thousand years. She had thought that that was very silly. Sometimes, too, she would drive out to the Tompkins County airport and rent a Piper and take off into the air for

hours. She had to land again before dark, since her pilot's license did not allow instrument flight. She would go for as long as she could and at sundown throttle down, move the flaps down, go into a dive much too steep to be safe, and land it (savagely, she would always think) with a good, hard bump when she hit the runway. Then she would go through the after-flight procedures very slowly. She had stopped taking Michael flying with her four months ago.

So tonight Amelia put *Anthems* on the turntable. She turned on the amplifier and the turntable and watched the record moving for a moment. Then she reached around the back of the amplifier and plugged in the wires that went to the speakers in her workroom. She lowered the tonearm and the dustcover.

She could hear the voices and electronic sounds coming from the back of the house.

She would need brushes, rags, a putty knife, chisels, a wire brush, paint remover, the mustard jar full of solvent.

Her thesis was a generative morphophonological analysis of Japanese; her committee chairman had recommended the subject. Tomorrow she would write the section on vowel devoicing.

She looked out the window and saw Michael walking towards the woods.

So tonight Amelia worked for two hours on the door she had set up on sawhorses. The newspapers on the floor rattled when she moved.

This product is a partial gel to facilitate use on vertical surfaces. Appropriate for naval uses. Caution: Contents may be under pressure. To open, twist cap slowly, allow air to escape, remove cap. Apply only to a clean, greaseless surface. Prior cleaning with soap and water may be necessary. Spread gel heavily but as evenly as possible over the surface, scrape off paint when loose and blistered, ten to twenty minutes. Repeated applications may be necessary for multiple layers of paint. Apply heavily and wash off to remove stain and varnish. Proper ventilation required. If swallowed do not induce vomiting; call physician immediately. Avoid contact with skin. In case of eye contact, flush with water, call physician immediately. Do not transfer this product to other containers.

Television

What did they say to each other when they were naked? Did Michael take his clothes off before Amelia did? Did Amelia take her clothes off while Michael was watching her? Is it that Michael stripped outside her house? Did he walk around looking for her? Maybe she was surprised when he walked into her workroom. Possibly her back was turned and she saw him reflected first in the window.

What do you think he said to her?
Did the pieces of wood and chips of old paint bite into his back like pebbles?
How many times did they have sex on the workroom floor? In what ways?
What ways did Amelia prefer? What ways did Michael prefer?

Breakfast

Sunlight as thin as morning was coming through the windows. Where it lit the floor the floor was smooth and warm-looking. Some of it shone on the sheets and Michael's chest. She looked at the sunlight on his chest and saw how it outlined each crisp dark hair and warmed the smooth pink of the nipple. She looked at him and got up.

She was the teaching assistant for an introductory linguistics course. The professor had asked her to talk about Japanese syntax today. Michael, working for his masters in astrophysics, was going to spend the next month working on the new pulsar data from the Arecibo radio observatory. His job was to explain the unexplained parts of earlier data. Last night when Michael told her about the consistent irregularities in the data stream, Amelia said, "Maybe they're talking to you." Michael did not think it was funny.

A while later Michael came down with no clothes. He knew she liked him to do that. Then she realized it was because he had left his clothes outside. He smiled but did not say anything. He went to the percolator and poured two cups of coffee. Amelia watched the muscles in his buttocks moving. He took the coffee into the front room. She heard the plates and silverware rattling as he set the table. They ate eggs, sausage, and buttered toast, and drank coffee without talking.

Michael went outside to get his clothes. He found all of them except his underwear. He came in and said, "I can't find my underwear." Amelia shrugged. Michael went upstairs with his clothes to get dressed. Amelia put the dishes in the sink.

A Lecture

In 106 Morrill Hall Amelia is talking about the syntactic structure of Japanese. She writes a tree diagram on the blackboard to show how English structures are predominantly right-branching. She writes another diagram to show how Japanese goes the other way. She is thinking about four green apples in a yellow basket. She numbers the words in the English and Japanese sentences to show how they are mirror images. She points out how a word-for-word gloss of the Japanese is incomprehensible.

Coffee

The Japanese aren't much for nouns but they really love verbs.

Amelia writes another tree diagram.

She notices that the chalk lines are a dirty yellow.

This makes her forget what she meant to say. She looks at her notes. She says Michael wa sasimi o tabe-sa-rare-taku-nakat-ta. She says Michael didn't want to be made to eat sashimi. Amelia feels suddenly very tired.

Another Point of View

Just now she sees Michael sitting in the back of the room. He is not looking at her because he is taking notes. Her voice breaks. He looks up.

Acta Linguistica Ithacae

After the lecture they walked upstairs from the lecture room to the Cornell Linguistics Circle lounge. Amelia took her mug from the shelf. "There're styrofoam cups over there," she said. Michael reached over and pulled one off of the top of the stack. Amelia filled her mug and Michael's styrofoam cup with coffee. She put fifty cents in the saucer by the coffeemaker.

She walked over to the yellow vinyl couch and sat down. Michael sat down beside her. He was stirring the cream into his coffee. She set hers on the table to cool enough to drink.

"It was a good lecture," Michael said, stirring his coffee.

Amelia ran her finger around the rim of her mug.

"I'm sorry," Michael said.

"Don't be," Amelia said. Then she said, "I am too." She picked up her coffee and sipped it. It was too hot. She set it down.

Michael was sitting on the edge of the couch, hunched over, his elbow on one knee and his cup of coffee on the other. He said to the cup of coffee, "Look, Amelia. Look, you know I don't like to fly the way you do. I don't understand it. I don't know anything about Japanese, but I heard your lecture. Maybe I know something about it now. It scares me the way you act when you fly." He took the cup of coffee off of his knee and set it on the floor. "You said that there are two kinds of languages. I think you must be left-branching and me right-branching. They don't make sense to each other."

Amelia said, "They can still be translated."

She drank some hot coffee.

She said, "I know you don't believe in transformational grammar."

Michael said; "I don't but that's not what I mean." He coughed. "I mean, I

can understand how it might be interesting, in a formal kind of way. What I don't understand is how it has anything to do with how people talk."

"It doesn't," Amelia said, "really. I guess. There's a lot of controversy about that."

"Controversy," Michael said. "Linguists," Michael said, "eat their dead."

"What?" Amelia asked.

"If they even wait until they're dead."

"What?" Amelia asked.

"Nothing," Michael said.

"Look," Amelia said, "do you see? Do you bother to see? Do you, you, there, Michael, working over data sheets from your pulsar observations, does the computer ever tell you about the word to word web that strings your tongue into your head and works nonabstractly up in the left half of your skull and makes you say *I love you*? Did you ever think that the orange and brown hills move the sky down into November? How much longer can phrase structure grammars and transformational rules allow a stream of buzzes, grunts, and pops to translate into an emotion that the same grammars sometimes cause us to call love? Oh it's a desperate adventure and courage and a clock, all of it which is a system, which has feeling, which has resignation and success. Oh how do you know what if that as. So we do yes can fly up therefore up and string a, cloud and if like thread into a needle. They be watch the however the words fly loop in the in loops in and and do try come yes could down for a landing landing. Throttle down and move down the flaps down runway clear down there! And do pulsars talk and if they do do they talk of saying love me to a crazy astronomer and if they do are their grammars transformational.

Japanese is a left-breaking language.

—Daryl Wakeley



—Robert Zimmet

Edward Hopper and the House by the Railroad (1925)

Out here in the exact middle of the day,
This strange, gawky house has the expression
Of someone being stared at, someone holding
His breath underwater, hushed and expectant;

This house is ashamed of itself, ashamed
Of its fantastic mansard rooftop
And its pseudo-Gothic porch, ashamed of
Its shoulders and large, awkward hands.

But the man behind the easel is relentless;
He is as brutal as sunlight, and believes
The house must have done something horrible
To the people who once lived here

Because now it is so desperately empty,
It must have done something to the sky
Because the sky, too, is utterly vacant
And devoid of meaning. There are no

Trees or shrubs anywhere—the house
Must have done something against the earth.
All that is present is a single pair of tracks
Straightening into the distance. No trains pass.

Now the stranger returns to this place daily
Until the house begins to suspect
That the man, too, is desolate, desolate
And somehow ashamed. Soon the house starts

To stare frankly at the man. And somehow
The empty white canvas slowly takes on
The expression of someone who is unnerved,
Someone holding his breath underwater.

And then one day the man simply disappears.
He is a last afternoon shadow moving
Across the tracks, making its way
Through the vast, darkening fields.

This man will paint other abandoned mansions,
And faded cafeteria windows, and poorly lettered
Storefronts on the edges of small towns.
Always they will have this same expression,

The utterly naked look of someone
Being stared at, someone American and gawky,
Someone who is about to be left alone
Again, and can no longer stand it.

—Edward Hirsch

★ **J.D. Kleinke** claims that he is a born-again nihilist • **Susan Libby** sent poems to *Calvert* and promptly moved, leaving no forwarding address ★ **Dawnelle Loiselle** was born in Tennessee • **Saundra Maley** is a UMCP English graduate student who co-edits Sybil Child Press ★ **J. Barry Messer** is a student of philosophy and design • **Sibbie O'Sullivan's** manuscript, *Listening For Trains*, was a finalist in this year's National Capital Poetry Series ★ **Laura Outerbridge** can see the lights of College Park and Beltsville from her balcony ★ **Allison Schuette** is a junior advertising and design major • **Paul Souders**, a junior journalism major, currently shoots for the *Montgomery Journal* ★ **W.R. Tish** is a former editor of the *Harvard Lampoon* and once thought he was Mighty Mouse ★ **Mary Welby Whiting**, a junior RTVF major, likes to show people as they really are • **Reed Whittemore** is a poet, biographer of William Carlos Williams, former Consultant in poetry at the Library of Congress, and a professor of English at UMCP. His latest collection of poems, *The Feel Of Rock*, is published by Dryad Press • **Stephen Young**, a sophomore conservation and natural resource development major, likes to photograph disturbed children • **Robert Zimmet** is currently INSPIRED • **Betty Bernard** writes poetry and fiction and is an English major ★ **John Carlson**, a junior English major, was selected to be next year's Student Regent ★ **Carl Channell** draws ★ **Michael Clark** is a senior advertising and design student • **Laura Dickinson** says she is still not old enough to have a one-sentence bio • **Jay Dougherty** is a TA and graduate student seeking a MA in English at UMCP ★ **Ruth B. Felsen** is a sophomore biochemistry major and wants to earn a black belt in Karate ★ **Verlyn Flieger** Verlyn Flieger... ★ **Paul Gehres** is a fine arts major who has created an entire collection of mailable art ★ **Lesley Hall** is a senior journalism major who wants to go to Egypt ★ **Shelly Hall** writes poetry and drives one of the UMCP shuttle buses • **Gerry Hinds** "divide and dissolve" ★ **Edward Hirsch** is the author of a book of poetry, *For The Sleepwalkers* (Knopf: 1981), and visited campus for a day this fall • **Albert Kapikian** works at the Library of Congress

★ new contributor

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